

The American Ambassador to the Secretary of State.
American Embassy,
St. Petersburg ,
December 16, 1911
Sazanoff, in an interview on the Jewish question with me said yesterday afternoon:
In regard to the vote of the House on the abrogation of the treaty it is incomprehensible that the United States should deliberately consider the sacrifice of a present and prospective market of hundreds of millions of dollars, knowing that Russia in return sold so very little to the United States.
I explained to him that the nature of the American people was completely misunderstood in Europe; that the nation was in no way materialistic in its temperament, but on the contrary was more easily appealed to by questions of sentiment where the appeal was made on the ground of humanity and civilization than any other nation in the world; and that, whether mistaken or not, if they believed in a [Page 697]cause they were ready to make any sacrince for its accomplishment. I explained frankly that the action of the House was unquestionably influenced by a sincere conviction that such action might have far-reaching results in inducing Russia to abandon not only restriction of foreign Jews but restriction of her own Jews, and pointed out that from the American point of view absolute freedom of speech and freedom of movement appeared to be the best cure for treason and conspiracy, by removing any possible grievance. He very courteously but with much emphasis declared that what might be true in America was not true in Russia and that the United States did not appreciate the Russian situation.
He added, not cynically but seriously, that he was prepared to consider an arrangement by which the United States might cooperate for the transfer of all Jews from Russia to the United States. He said that Russian experience was that their presence in Russia was a perpetual menace, not only to the integrity of the Empire, but to law and order.
He further confirmed the previous statements of his associates to me that if the treaty of 1832 should be abrogated Russia would never consent even to consider another treaty that did not explicitly give both nations the same right to exclude general classes of persons, deemed by each respectively to be undesirable, that he claims the United States now exercises. He quoted again the familiar illustration of our exclusion of Russian subjects under the treaty. He said that we should appreciate that restriction of undesirable citizens, among whom in Russian eyes the Jew stands chief, is no question of sentiment but a matter of national existence. I called his attention to certain newspaper statements in regard to bills now said to be before the Duma, not only abolishing passport restrictions but also abolishing the Jewish pale. He explained that though some radical members might present such bills, not only would the Government be unable, especially with the present excited feeling against the Jews, to take up such bills, but that neither the present Duma nor any Duma likely to be chosen would consent to their adoption.
In regard to the betterment of present conditions he confirmed my interpretation to you of the recent ruling, that the Russian Government, while refusing, as a matter of principle, to accept any Jew whom the United States chooses to send, regardless of his character or previous record as a violator of Russian laws, yet is perfectly willing to admit for temporary sojourn any respectable American Jew who can show reasonable grounds why, for business affairs, it is necessary that he should visit Russia.
He repeated in substance the interview telegraphed December 14, to the effect that Russia could never accept a policy of absolutely free admission, by which the United States or any other nation would be given the power to send back into Russia a Jewish Nihilist, for example, to plot against the Empire, merely on the ground that he had remained long enough out of Russia to be naturalized as a foreign subject or citizen.
Guild.
https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1911/d1013